

# Governing beyond the metropolis: placing the rural in city-region development

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# Outline

1. City-regionalism and the rural question
2. Placing the rural in city-region development
3. Responding to the challenge of placing the rural in city-region development
4. Conclusion

# 1. City-regionalism and the rural question

“The focus thus far has been almost exclusively on urban manifestations ... But **what, we might ask, is becoming of the interstitial spaces lying between metropolitan areas** ... Many such spaces are undergoing significant transformation in this historical moment of capitalism, especially as they become increasingly articulated with the rhythms and cultures of the modern metropolis. As such, they are also a significant and revealing element of the world in emergence” (Scott, 2011, 857-858)

“Sub-regional scales of working have increasingly been promoted as a means of securing greater spatial equity and economic competitiveness. But whilst significant attention has been placed on the impact of new sub-regional governance arrangements on urban areas, **there has been little consideration of the nature and effectiveness of such arrangements on rural areas**” (Pemberton and Shaw, 2012, 441)

“... carries risks of addressing rural localities solely in terms of their relation to the urban, of disregarding any sense of an overarching, interregional rural condition, and of **marginalizing rural concerns within structures dominated economically and demographically by cities**” (Woods 2009, 852).

**“The city region approach reproduces a rural development problem.** It establishes and reinforces out-of-date notions of geographical centrality and hierarchies, and it actively marginalises places, consigning them to the periphery, dividing and polarising. City regions are taking root in regional economic development and spatial planning across the UK, and they are raising profound challenges for those involved in the economic development of rural areas.” (Ward, 2006, 52)

# Our take

**Context:** 57 per cent of net aggregate growth in the UK in the period 1995-2007 was accounted for by 'intermediate regions' (OECD, 2011)

**Problem:** "city-regions are an innovative way to manage urban-rural interaction, but at present the rural component seems to be ignored" (OECD, 2011: 222)

**Our approach:** Form and function (cf. Harrison & Hoyler, 2013)

**Case:** divergent trajectories of England & Wales

## 2. Placing the rural in city-region development

- Rural → regional → city-regional
- Agglomeration
- Scale
- Hub and spokes

# #1 ‘Agglomeration’ perspective

“dense polarised masses of capital, labour, and social life that are bound up in intricate ways in intensifying and far-flung extra-national relationships. As such, they represent an outgrowth of large metropolitan areas – or contiguous sets of metropolitan areas – together with surrounding hinterlands of variable extent which may themselves be sites of scattered urban settlements”

## #2 ‘Scale’ perspective

“a strategic and political level of administration and policy-making, extending beyond the administrative boundaries of single urban local government authorities to include urban and/or semi-urban hinterlands”



### #3 ‘Hub and spokes’ perspective

“a functionally inter-related geographical area comprising a central, or core city, as part of a network of urban centres and rural hinterlands. A little bit like the hub (city) and the spokes (surrounding urban/rural areas) on a bicycle wheel”

### **3. Responding to the challenge of placing the rural in city-region development**

**Rural → regional → city-regional**

**Conclusion:** paralysis/dead-end?

**Either** “spatially selective, city-first, agglomeration”

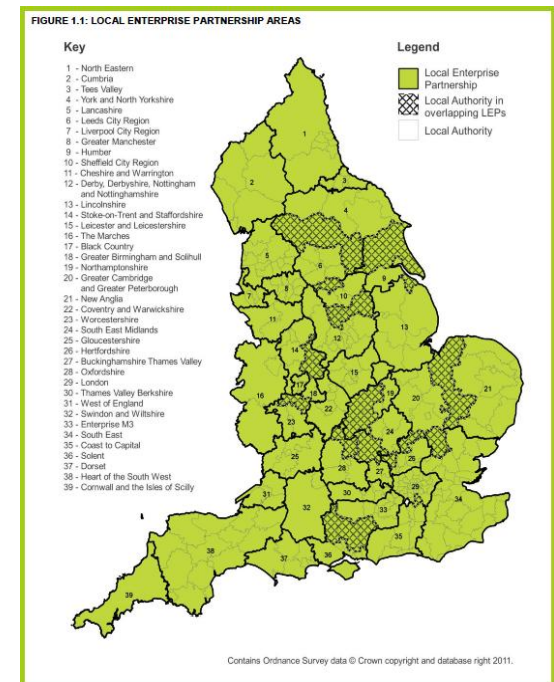
**Or** “spatially inclusive, region-first, scalar approach”

# A missed opportunity: LEPs and rural development

- Rhetoric (functional dominance)/reality (*realpolitik* ... total coverage). What is new then from regions?
- Functional dominance closed off

Unexplored: **hub** and **spokes** or is it

- “spokes with a hub (or hubs)”
- “spokes with an emerging hub (or hubs)”
- “spokes without a hub”



# From functional economies to city-first: the Welsh retreat

- *Wales Spatial Plan (2004/2008)*

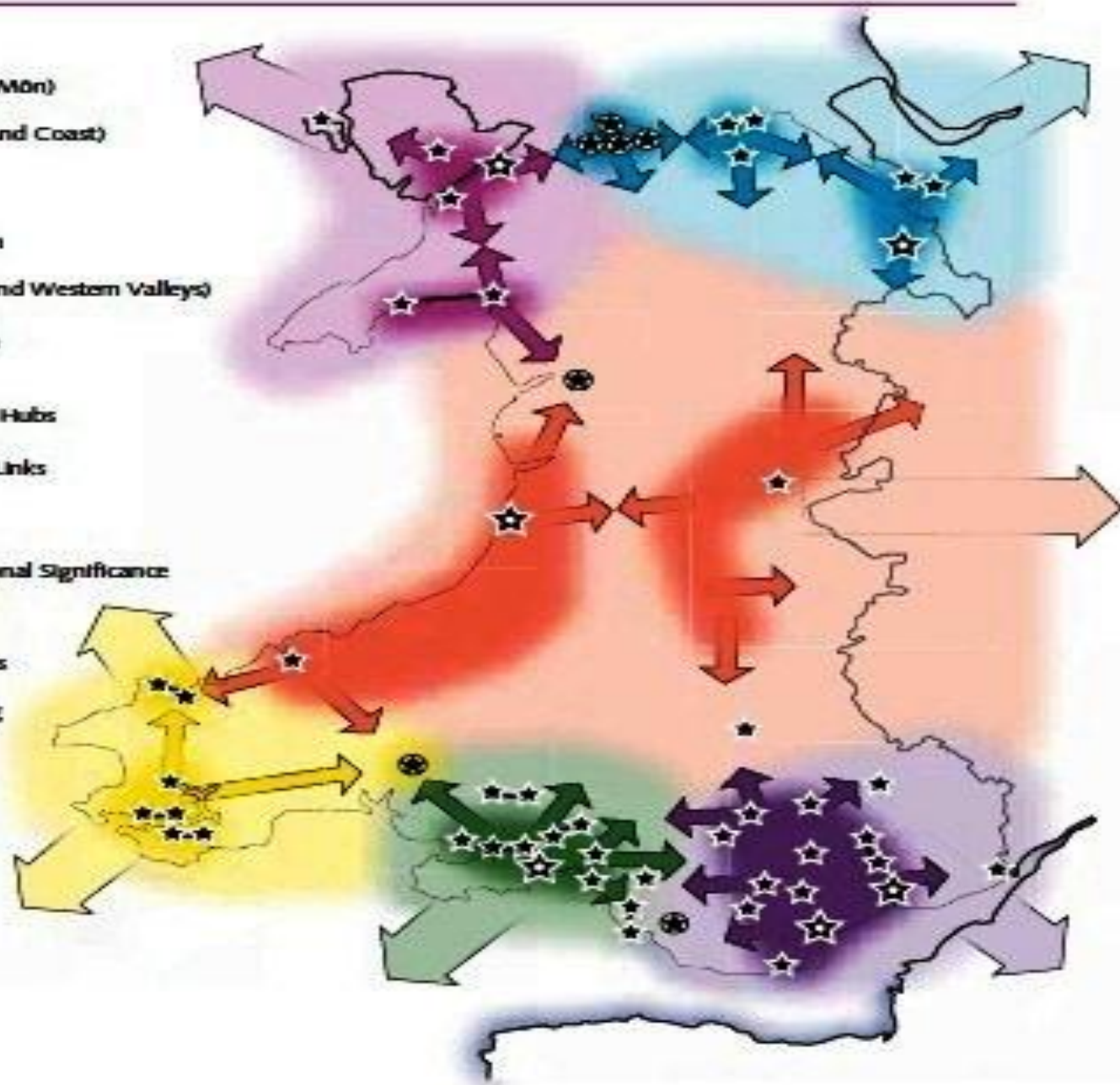
“These small market towns differ from the extensive urban areas ... in their relative isolation, their enhanced service function compared to population and their interactions with the surrounding rural areas. Because of the Area’s rurality, relative peripherality and population sparsity, *its most populous settlements need to fulfil roles and functions that would normally be associated with much larger towns.* (WAG, 2008, 85 our emphasis)

- 35 ‘key centres’ (2004) → 57 ‘key settlements’ (2008)

# The National Vision

- North West Wales (Eryri a Môn)
- North East Wales (Border and Coast)
- Central Wales
- Pembrokeshire - The Haven
- Swansea Bay (Waterfront and Western Valleys)
- South East - Capital Region

- Areas with Socio-economic Hubs
- International/Interregional Links
- Regional Links
- Key Settlements with National Significance
- Primary Key Settlements
- Cross-boundary Settlements
- Linked Centres representing a single "Key Settlement"



# Typology of 'key settlements'

- 6 key settlements with **national** significance (Aberystwyth, Bangor, **Cardiff**, Newport, **Swansea**, Wrexham);
- 26 primary key settlements;
- 7 cross-boundary settlements (e.g. Carmarthen, Dolgellau);
- 9 linked centres representing a single 'key settlement' (e.g. Pwllheli-Porthmadog)

# November 2011: *City Regions Task and Finish Group* “to identify potential city regions in Wales”



“[Our advocacy of city-regionalism] is not to suggest that the city region approach is the only answer to economic development problems. **It clearly is not applicable to large rural areas, which require a different approach**; nor is it necessarily the answer for all towns and cities, some of which (for example Cambridge) are perfectly capable of thriving economically without recourse to the concept.” (*City Regions Task and Finish Group*, 2012, 21 our emphasis)

## 4. Concluding comments

**Problem?** City-region paralysis

**Alternative?** 'City-first' or 'region-first' (cf. Coombes, 2013)

**Why?**

1. Not going to be acceptable to conceptualise the rural simply as an appendage hanging on to the coattails of the great modern metropolis if city-regionalism is to succeed as a policy development tool.
2. Rural areas appear increasingly to be the 'glass jaw' of city-region policy





“possibility of the region taking ontological precedence over the city” (p3)

Migration / commuting flows

“the empirical analysis found no ‘*non* city-region’ in England” (p.15)

Figure 3. Potential city-regions and selected cities or large urban areas.